



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

News Release

November 19, 2004

**WOMAN SENTENCED TO 18 MONTHS IN PRISON FOR VISA FRAUD AND
MONEY LAUNDERING IN CONNECTION WITH CAMBODIAN ADOPTION SCAM**
-- Beach-front home in Hawaii and luxury vehicle forfeited to the government --

SEATTLE, WA – Leigh Winchell, Special Agent-in-Charge, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Seattle, and John McKay, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Washington, today announced that a resident of Hawaii was sentenced to 18 months in prison in connection with an international adoption scam involving Cambodia.

Today, U.S. District Court Judge Thomas S. Zilly sentenced **LAURYN GALINDO**, age 53, to 18 months in prison, 3 years of supervised release, 300 hours of community service, and more than \$60,000 dollars in restitution for Conspiracy to Commit Visa Fraud and Conspiracy to Launder Money, and Structuring of Financial Transactions. In addition, Galindo is ordered to forfeit the proceeds of her crime to the government in the form of her home in Hawaii worth \$1.4 million, and the value of her Jaguar (approx \$25,000).

In July of 2004, Galindo admitted she organized the scheme whereby some Cambodian children were taken from their families and represented on immigration forms as orphans. In sentencing Galindo today Judge Zilly stated: "conduct regarding children who were taken from their families far outweighs all the other good work you did for other children."

This case stems from a two-year investigation into the adoption of Cambodian infants by American families in which material misrepresentations as to the orphan status and identities of the infants were made by Galindo to the State Department and to the former Immigration and Naturalization Service, whose investigative functions are now carried out by ICE of the Department of Homeland Security. The misrepresentations were made from 1997 thru 2001 in order to obtain visas for the infants to travel with their adopting parents to the United States.

"This investigation focused on a scheme that treated hundreds of children as nothing more than commodities," said Leigh Winchell, special agent-in-charge for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Seattle. "Their criminal behavior exploited not only our nation's immigration system, but defrauded hundreds of well-meaning American parents who wanted nothing more than to provide orphans with a loving home."

On December 10, 2003, **LYNN DEVIN**, the sister of Lauryn Galindo entered a plea of guilty to related charges. Devin will be sentenced next month.

Both Galindo and Devin committed the offenses using Seattle International Adoptions (SIA), a Seattle based company. The government plans to take no action which would jeopardize the residency status of Cambodian children in the United States who were adopted thru SIA.

At the sentencing hearing Galindo's defense attorney argued that the Judge should consider his client's charitable work and mental state and sentence his client to probation. Judge Zilly rejected those arguments saying her "charitable work made it possible to commit the crimes" and noting that while there had been a great deal of discussion about Galindo's childhood trauma, his concern was the trauma suffered by children "ripped from their parents, and robbed of their identities."

The case was jointly prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jim Lord of the Western District of Washington and Trial Attorney Michael Barr of the Domestic Security Section of the Department of Justice. Michael Seabright, Assistant United States Attorney for the District of Hawaii assisted in the prosecution.

The case was investigated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement of the Department of Homeland Security, and the Internal Revenue Service.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.